

The BA Guide to Social Media for Bookshops

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Social media for bookshops

Using social media is a powerful way to connect with existing and potential customers and to market your bookshop. The majority of booksellers now use some or all of the main social media platforms to promote titles and build their brand, as well as creating a sense of community. If you sell online, social media can be a great tool in driving trade to your website (or to your page on bookshop.org).

Being active on social media also allows you to keep in touch with the book community online, including publishers, influencers and authors.

This guide looks at the five main platforms at the time of writing: Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube and TikTok. It sets out the basics of using them and then looks at additional functions for those of you who want to expand your approach to using these platforms. We undertook a small survey of BA members in January 2022 to see what platforms were popular and have included some of the responses in this guide.

We have also included ideas for improving the visibility of your online posts and for driving traffic to your website and to your Bookshop.org profile. For ideas about running events online via social media, please see **The BA Guide to Running Virtual Events**, which you can download from the BA website.

The best way to get to know a platform, once you have read the basics here, is to set up an account and, at first, simply watch what others do. Start by searching for other bookshops and see how they use social media.

Social media can help bookshops:

- Engage with new and existing customers
- Monitor feedback and troubleshoot customer queries online
- Promote competitions and promotions
- Promote your stock and reinforce your expertise
- Share staff recommendations
- Market author events
- Share ideas and thoughts which create a sense of what your bookshop is all about
- Share in-store photographs/videos
- Keep in touch with your home community, as part of the local retail scene
- Interact with authors, publishers and other booksellers
- Keep up to date with the BA and its campaigns
- Stay up to date with industry news, and join the wider book community online, including bloggers and influencers
- Source new suppliers
- Drive traffic to your website
- Boost sales
- Learn about your customers through analytics tools
- Build your brand
- Share best practice and ideas with other bookshops.

To spread the word about your bookshop, the social media conversation is definitely one worth joining.

"Social media is our staple and has provided the foundation for our continued existence and growth, far more advantageous than posters or print or local radio. It does require total attention and commitment even when things are quiet. We hear (because we ask) where people heard of us or learned about new events - and it is invariably Facebook, with, of course, people sharing items with their friends and families."

George Cooper, The Children's Bookshelf



Keep in touch with the BA and the industry

The Booksellers Association uses social media to

communicate with members and to promote bookshops to consumers. We use social media to extend the reach of our campaigning and lobbying work, and we supply members with social media assets to support them in promoting campaigns such as Independent Bookshop Week, Indie Book Awards, Indie Book of the Month, Irish Book Week, Bookshop Day and the Books Are My Bag Readers Awards. We use social media to promote and stream events.

We also provide booksellers with a platform to share ideas and network with other BA members and access professional development opportunities, in the form of the Booksellers Network on Facebook. At the time of writing, 850 members are part of the Booksellers Network.

The BA supplies members with a social media toolkit including a variety of social media assets for bookshops to use on their own social media profiles at key moments throughout the bookselling year, including all our campaigns.

The BA is one among many organisations you might follow on your chosen platform. Here are a few for starters:

- Booksellers Association
- Books Are My Bag
- Bookselling Ireland
- The Booksellers Network (Facebook)
- National Book Tokens
- Batch
- World Book Day
- Booktime Magazine
- Bookshop.org
- Gardners
- The Bookseller
- BookBrunch

- Unwin Charitable Trust
- The Reading Agency
- Women's Prize for Fiction
- National Poetry Day
- Costa Book Awards
- BookTrust
- The Booker Prizes

"Social media has been a key tool for us in getting the word out about our shop, connecting with readers and sharing our love for books and bookselling."

Jack Clark, Portobello Bookshop



Finding the time

Social media is a largely free means of promotion but there is a cost – and that is time.

Maintaining your profile can take up staff resources. If you

are entering the social media arena, or expanding your presence onto a new platform, do consider how your feeds will be updated and responses monitored – to keep your posts in the public eye, your bookshop will need to maintain a flow of new posts, otherwise computer algorithms will slide your name down the list of what gets shown. And if customers are ordering titles through these platforms or trying to interact with you, they need a response.

Is there anyone on your staff team who is social media savvy? Could you use different staff members for different platforms (but how will you keep the message consistent)? Some bookshops pay a retainer to a publicity person to maintain their social media profiles.

See the *Saving time* section on page 23 of this guide for some tools to help with scheduling posts in bulk.

All this is worth the effort! Many booksellers feel their presence on social media is invaluable for them to survive and flourish.

"I've always used social media but it saved my bookshop bacon during the lockdowns and it's still a great way to showcase so many more books that would otherwise be lost in my tiny bookshop."

Kate Harris, Harris & Harris Bookshop



Accessibility

If you are concerned about accessibility in your social media posts, there are built-in tools available on all social media platforms to improve

accessibility, or you can use external software to improve your post before uploading. When you're sharing a video, for example, you can add captions or subtitles. You can also add alt text ("alternative text" which describes the image for screen readers) and image descriptions to photos or assets (graphics, logos, banners etc.).

If you'd like help with doing this, contact the Social Media Manager at the BA.



Problem followers and trolls

We have included a small amount of information under each platform about **blocking** or **muting** individuals who

are causing you trouble or being abusive – unfortunately, something social media users may face, as you might with any customer-facing channel.

If you find yourself in a difficult position on social media – a negative comment perhaps or an unpleasant interaction, don't panic. Determine whether the person is a genuine customer or whether they are a troll who is looking to cause trouble, and go from there. It's important to remain calm and use the tools available to you, not only to create a positive community but for your own wellbeing.

If you find yourself in need of support and advice, please contact the Social Media Manager at the BA.

"Social media is an integral part of my bookselling career. I took over the bookshop in November 2021 and have already gained a few hundred new Instagram followers and intend to keep gaining. Customers have already commented on how much they're enjoying what I'm doing with it."

Amy Wright, Pritchards Bookshop

Twitter



Twitter is an online news and social networking site where users communicate in

short messages known as “tweets” which (at the time of writing) can be up to 280 characters. Twitter is a great platform for engagement with its fast-paced and real-time communication where users can post messages and share photos, videos, GIFs and links. These messages are posted to your profile and your followers’ feeds. Users can also send direct messages which can’t be seen in the public feed.

Twitter can help booksellers communicate and engage with existing and potential new customers, and with the wider industry.

In a small survey of BA member independent bookshops, 75% of respondents use Twitter. Many of them find Twitter most useful for engaging with the wider industry and authors, although they also engage with customers through the platform, especially those outside their local area.

Twitter basics

Tweet: A tweet may contain photos, GIFs, videos, links, and text.

Home Timeline: This is where you’ll see tweets from accounts and Topics you follow.

@: Your username, also known as a **handle**, begins with an “@” symbol, e.g. @booksaremybag. You can use @ to Mention other accounts in your tweets and bring others into the conversation.

Mention: Mentioning other accounts in your tweet by including their handle.

Like: A way to engage with content from other accounts and show you have read the tweet. See a tweet you like or agree with? Tap the heart icon under the tweet to show your support. When you like a tweet, this will appear in your list of likes on your profile, which is public.

Retweet: You can Retweet (re-post) tweets from other accounts, which will then appear on your own Twitter account and on your followers’ timelines. Whether relevant to your audience or to your business, retweeting is a good way to spread the word without drafting a tweet yourself. You might Retweet posts about books, authors, local news or things which you are interested in and will add to the personality of your bookshop’s account.

Quote Tweet: A Retweet but with an added comment, photo, video or GIF from you.

Hashtag (#): See what everyone’s talking about by clicking on a hashtag, to keep you in touch with trends and news. Hashtags connect tweets that talk about the same subject, putting all those tweets in one place. Add a hashtag (e.g. #ChooseBookshops) to a tweet and it will not only appear on your own profile, but also under that hashtag when a user searches for it.

Search: Use the Search feature to find specific tweets, accounts and topics.

Follow: Follow accounts that are interesting or useful to your bookshop. Following an account means you’ve chosen to subscribe to their updates.

Thread: A series of connected tweets. A great way to share content that can't fit into one tweet alone due to the character limit.

Explore: A range of topics, popular hashtags and subjects as well as trending topics and latest news.

DM (Direct Message): A private message between the recipient and your account. Generally, you can only send a DM to someone if you follow each other but some accounts have privacy settings that allow DMs from all accounts.

Create a Twitter account

1. Join Twitter

Go to **Twitter.com** or download the app where you'll be guided through the sign-up process.

2. Pick a username

Your username, also known as your handle (e.g. @booksaremybag) is both the name followers use when sending replies, mentions and Direct Messages and the URL for your Twitter profile. Choose a simple username so users can identify you easily.

3. Customise your profile

Go to your Profile and click **Edit profile** where you'll be able to:

- Edit your name
- Upload a profile photo, such as your bookshop logo (at the time of writing the recommended dimensions are 400x400 pixels)
- Add a short bio to describe your bookshop (at the time of writing the character limit is 160 characters)
- Add a Header photo, such as a photo of your bookshop (at the time of writing the recommended dimensions are 1500x500 pixels)
- Include your website address if you wish

- Add a location so users know where you're based.

4. Follow people and topics

Search for other Twitter accounts and follow them. Start by following @BAbooksellers and @booksaremybag, authors, publishers, local businesses and especially other bookshops. It's always helpful to see what other individuals and businesses are talking about.

Follow **Topics** in addition to other accounts to fill your timeline with tweets about what you love – e.g. "Books".

5. Visit Explore

The **Explore** tab is a good way to find out what's trending in your area and around the world.

6. Join the conversation

Click "Tweet" and type your first tweet. You can also add photos/videos/GIFs/emojis and more.

7. Spread the word

Start displaying your bookshop @handle (and/or use social media buttons) on your website, email signature, newsletter, receipts, in-store posters and other marketing materials to encourage people to follow you on Twitter.

"I find Twitter quite useful for engaging with regular customers, and I do get orders through it. However, I find it most useful for connecting with writers and publishers and learning about new and future book releases."

Jenna Warren, Book Corner

Jenna Warren, Book Corner

Building your brand

- Establish a genuine and authentic voice; determine the tone and face of your business and reflect that in your posts.
- Be credible and friendly; don't try to use Twitter as a one-way pitch to customers as this will come across as insincere and unattractive. Instead, use Twitter to build a relationship with existing and prospective customers, recommend new titles, respond to feedback honestly and engage in non-bookshop talk once in a while.

Tips for effective content

- Give your shop a personality; tweet staff book recommendations and in-shop happenings.
- Give your followers exclusive content, such as behind-the-scenes at an author event.
- Tag (@) the publisher and author – even if they don't retweet, a like from them will mean that more people will see your tweet.
- Built excitement for upcoming book releases and encourage pre-orders from your shop.
- Reward your followers; run competitions.
- Engage and entice your followers; share exclusive photos from book fairs and shop events via Twitter (photos of visits by dogs are very popular posts!).
- Listen to your followers; use Twitter as a research tool and ask for customer feedback and suggestions.



Enhancing your Twitter profile

Twitter Lists

You can organise and streamline your Twitter experience by using Lists. This function allows you to group other users into a public or private list. This means you can follow certain topics or groups of people more easily – for example, you could create a list of UK publishers, non-book product suppliers or children's authors. When you view a List, you will be able to see the tweets from that group of users, all in one place. Please note: you don't have to be following a user to add them to a List.

Create a Twitter List:

- To create a new List, first click on your profile icon and select **Lists** and select **Create new list**.
- Include a list name and description and set your list to either public or private.
- Use the search tool to find users or select users from who you are **Following** or your **Followers**.

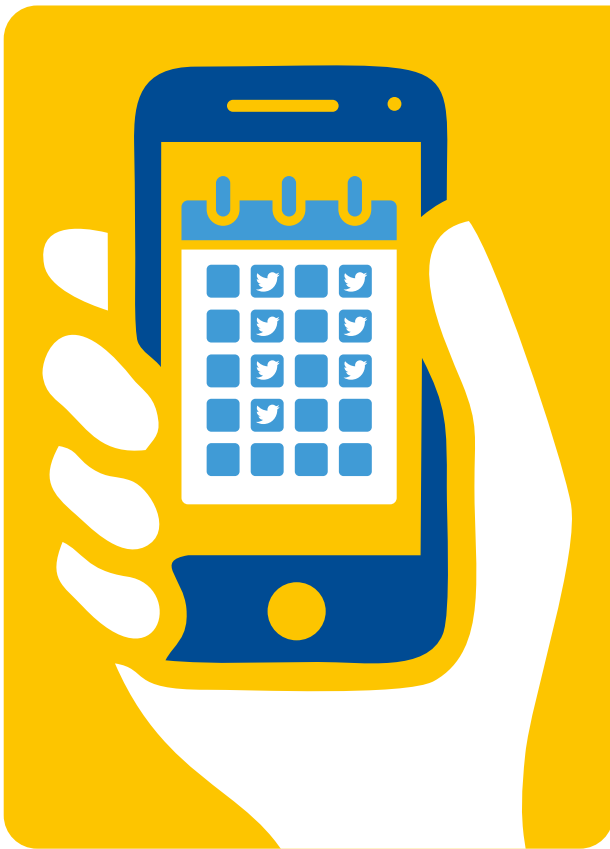
Uploading photos, videos, GIFS and assets

Including media in your tweets such as photos, videos, social media assets (such as logos for use online supplied to members for BA campaigns) and GIFs (animated images) will attract more attention and help boost engagement.

To upload an image, click on the image/GIF icon when composing your tweet.

Scheduling tweets

Draft a tweet in advance and select the calendar icon when you're drafting it, and schedule Twitter to post it for you at a later time. Planning ahead and doing this for multiple tweets (for example, if you are running a promotion or publicising an event) can save a lot of time.



Blocking followers on Twitter

To **Mute, Block** or **Report** an account or a specific tweet, you can either select the tweet or go to their profile and click on the three-dot icon, where you will find options to Mute, Block, Remove and Report a follower. There is also an option of making your account temporarily private but only do this as a last resort. You can also find out more information about privacy and safety under Settings and Privacy.

Twitter analytics

Using Twitter analytics for your business helps you make decisions on the best way to use your platform. Track key metrics such as follower increase/decrease, engagement of tweets and more.

To access Twitter analytics, click on **More** on the main menu (where **Home, Explore** and **Notifications** etc. are) and click on Analytics. Please note: the analytics dashboard is only available via desktop. Analytics for individual tweets is available on mobile.

"We use Twitter to promote Bookshop.org lists, retweet new releases, see which authors are doing events and message authors (which is often quicker than going through a publicist). We publicise events through it, which highlights them to our audience but it's also good that the author can see you are working hard to promote their event."

Emma Milne-White, Hungerford Bookshop

Emma Milne-White, Hungerford Bookshop

Facebook



Facebook is a helpful marketing tool for many of our booksellers.

A bookshop can

set up a Facebook Page, and when other Facebook users **Like** or **Follow** your Page, they will receive updates from your bookshop on their timeline. Users can also search for your bookshop name to find your Page and see what you are doing (events, promotions, taking part in local events etc).

In our small survey, all the bookshops who responded have a Facebook Page. Many find it particularly good for engaging with their local community, although some have found engagement falling in recent years – it very much depends on your location and particular audience.

"We have found that Facebook seems to fit the shop's demographic in terms of engagement and I think we get more engagement from Facebook than other social media platforms. We use it to keep customers informed of things that are happening in the shop; it is linked to the website in terms of a Facebook shop and every now and then, we're just a bit daft on it! It keeps customers and friends in the loop. It's useful to engage, enthuse and inform."

Richard Drake, DRAKE – The Bookshop

Facebook basics

Facebook Page: A Page is a public account that can represent a business. Facebook Pages are administered by individuals through their personal account (note: the information from your personal account will not be publicly visible on your business Page).

Page Administrator: A Page Administrator controls a Facebook page and can assign page roles to other users.

Page Like: When someone likes a Page, they're showing their support for the business and its content.

Page Follow: When a user follows a Page, they will receive updates about the Page in their News Feed.

Facebook Reactions: This function enables users to give feedback on posts, comments and profiles by clicking an emoji icon (Like, Love, Care, Haha, Wow, Sad and Angry).

Tagging: A tag links a Facebook user, page, or place to something you post, by mentioning @ their/its name.

News Feed: A list of automatically generated posts that a user sees when they log on to Facebook. When a Facebook user 'likes' or follows your page, they will start to see your Page updates in their personal News Feed. As a Page Administrator, the News Feed is where all the latest posts and stories from Pages that you have 'liked' as a company will appear.

Messenger: A way of communicating with your customers via private messages.

Stories: A space to upload quick photo and video updates, with effects available to enhance them. All content posted to Stories lasts only 24 hours. Similar to Instagram Stories, content shared to Stories will appear at the top of the Facebook News Feed. Users can also reply to Stories and send private messages – for example, if you were to upload a photo of new books arriving in-store, a customer could reply to place an order.

Create a Facebook Page

Facebook Pages are created and administered via a personal profile. If you don't already have a personal profile on Facebook, you must first set one up before you can create a Business Page.

1. To create a Page

Click on the Pages icon and add your bookshop name; select a category and add a description.

Once you have created your Page, you can begin to build your brand by customising the page – including uploading a profile picture and a brief description of the shop. Have a look at other bookshops' Pages to see what works.

When you create a Page, you are automatically assigned the role of Page Administrator; this means you can manage posts and monitor page notifications and engagement.

To add multiple administrators to the bookshop Page, head over to settings and Page roles where you can assign a new Page role so your colleague(s) have access to the page.

2. Create a Username for your Facebook Page

When a Facebook Page is created it's assigned a unique URL (address) which you can then customise to create a username. Ideally, the username should be the bookshop name so people can find your Page easily and can tag you in posts. To set up a username, click on **Create @ username**.

You can now start to promote your Page. Notify customers on your mailing-list that you are now operating as a business on Facebook. You can also notify your friends on your personal Facebook account by clicking on **Invite friends to like your Page**.

3. Post Content

To post on your Facebook Page, click on "Create Post" where you can add text, links, photos and videos.

Update your audience regularly with posts on your Page. This could include advance events information or photos after the event happens, what's happening in your bookshop world, latest titles and promotions, etc.

The frequency and timings of Page posts depends on your audience group and your message. Experiment with posts in order to find a schedule that reaches your audience most effectively. Play around with posting with varying frequency and at different times of the day and monitor the response via Facebook Insights.

Tips for effective content

- Be genuine and establish a credible voice; reinforce your expertise and offer genuine help and advice to your audience. For example, post weekly staff book recommendations to give your shop a familiar voice and personality. It is important not to treat your posts like a sales pitch, as this will just turn readers off. Instead, offer honest, tailored suggestions, just as you would with a physical customer in-store.
- Reward your fans. Run promotional offers exclusively for your Facebook fans. Devise ways of turning online followers into physical customers – for instance, you could run regular literary-themed competitions through your Facebook Page, with winners receiving a discount off their next in-store purchase.
- Vary your content; include photos and videos from author events. This will help to engage your fans and promote your events diary.
- Ask questions; use Facebook to learn from your customers and to improve their customer experience.



Enhancing your Facebook profile

Tagging

Increase the reach of your Page posts by tagging. A tag links a person, a place or a Page to a post; when you set a tag in a post (i.e mention them), the person or Page will receive a notification that they have been tagged. To tag a person or another Page in your post, type @ and begin to type their name. You will then be able to select the name from an autosuggest drop-down menu.

Posting photos and videos

Posts with photos and videos will increase engagement and reach.

Promote your events

A useful tool for bookshops is **Events** – a great way to promote and invite your followers to any in-store or online events.

Tell your story

Bookshops are full of stories and one way to catch the attention of Facebook users is to tell your story – share behind-the-scenes content, be personal with your audience and humanize your business.

Hashtags

Hashtags are usually associated with other social media platforms such as Twitter and Instagram but can be just as effective on Facebook. For example, using a hashtag such as #ChooseBookshops in your post would mean that it would appear alongside other posts also using this hashtag. This makes your post both easily searchable and part of a larger conversation.

Scheduled posts

It's important to regularly update a Facebook Page and keep up communication with your audience, but you or your staff may not have the time to do this regularly throughout the day. Scheduling posts in advance is an effective way to make sure something is going out to your audience, even when you can't do it in real time.

To schedule a post, click on **Create a post** and once your post is finished, click on the arrow next to **Publish** and then **Schedule**. Set a date and time you'd like your post to be live, selecting a time to create most engagement and to avoid clashing with other posts. By checking your Page Insights, you'll be able to see which days and times are most popular for your audience.

Insights

The **Insights** dashboard provides usage data ('metrics') about a Business Page. Administrators can measure the performance of their Page and posts. Facebook Insights tool will allow you to see analytics such as numbers of Page Likes, post reach, engagement, user demographics and Page views. Access the Insights Dashboard via the administration panel.



Live feeds and events on Facebook

Another great way to engage with your audience is by using the **Facebook Live** feature which you can use to either go 'Live' instantly or to schedule a Live event for the future. When you go Live on Facebook, your followers will be notified and will be able to tune-in.

For ideas about running events online via social media, please see **The BA Guide to Running Virtual Events**, which you can download from the BA website.

Blocking followers on Facebook

There are ways to **Ban** or **Block** users or other pages from your business page under **Settings**, as well as **Reporting** and **Hiding** individual comments under your posts when required.

Instagram



Instagram is a popular photo-sharing app used by millions of businesses including other bookshops, publishers, authors and other members of the book trade. It's a useful tool for bookshops as there is a huge and thriving book community of active users. Around 83% in our small survey of booksellers use Instagram, many highlighting how useful it is for engaging with customers.

People share their love of reading, connect with other readers and support their local bookshops, sharing photos of their bookshelves, holiday reads and bookshop events they attended. At the time of writing, the hashtag #bookstagram had been used in over 72 million posts.

Instagram is based on the visual and is built almost entirely around sharing photographs and videos, though text can also be included. For booksellers, the platform is useful for posting aesthetically appealing images of their shop, their stock and pictures related to upcoming or recent events, creating a brand or personality for the shop and its staff. This can include video

reviews of books as well as recordings and live-feeds from events.

Instagram basics

Instagram Post: A photo, banner or video with a caption that sits permanently on your profile (unless deleted/archived).

Instagram Stories: One of the most popular features on the platform. You can upload photos, videos, GIFs and more as part of a Story which disappear after 24 hours. It's possible to store all stories posted on your account in the **Archive** section, which can be useful for creating Highlights (more on that below) and re-posting and re-purposing old content.

Highlights: After 24 hours, Instagram Stories disappear from your profile, unless you add them to a **Highlight** – for example, a bookshop might want to create a 'staff picks' highlight of all the Instagram Stories of staff book recommendations. The highlights appear on your profile, underneath your username and bio.

Bio: A short description of your business.

Filters: A popular feature, there's a vast selection of filters available to enhance photos.

Follow: When you follow another account – whether business or personal – you'll see the content associated with those users on your timeline. You'll also be able to see their Instagram Stories at the top of the screen by clicking on their profile picture.

Followers: Your followers are listed on your profile and they'll see your content on their timelines.

Hashtag (#): A hashtag is used to categorise words or phrases. For instance, if you use the hashtag #bookshop on a post, it'll appear publicly to anyone searching for that specific hashtag. Hashtags are key to widening your audience and it's a good experiment to see which hashtags are best for your posts, such as locational hashtags or book-related hashtags.

Home: The home button will take you to your timeline. Here you can scroll through posts from your followers, as well as adding your own posts.

IG: Much-used abbreviation for Instagram.

Instagram handle: Your handle is your username – e.g. @booksaremybag. Like other social media platforms, the username is required when tagging other users in your posts or Stories.

Tag: To tag another user on Instagram use the @ symbol to tag them in a caption or Instagram Story.

Instagram Direct: This is a function to privately message other users. For example, a customer might message you privately to order a book or you might send a direct message to a publisher to request more details about a book. Keep an eye on Message Requests (both “Top Requests” and “All Requests”) for any messages from users that you’re not following, which you’ll find next to your Primary and General inbox within Instagram Direct.

"Instagram in particular has allowed us to showcase selections of our favourite titles, both new and old, and we feel our followers really value the effort we put into our posts and recommendations. It's lovely to see them engage with us so regularly and share their own favourite books too. Nothing beats meeting readers face to face at the shop, but for keeping connected with anyone who wants to stay updated on the goings on at our shop, our current reading, and sometimes just see us share a lovely dog who's visited us, Instagram is a brilliant platform that's proven hugely valuable to us." Jack Clark, Portobello Bookshop

Create an Instagram account

To create an Instagram account, download the Instagram app from the App Store (iPhone) or Google Play Store (Android) or go to [instagram.com](https://www.instagram.com) from a computer.

1. When you sign up for an Instagram account, create a **business profile** which will give you access to tools and features specifically created for businesses. If you already have a personal Instagram account and would like to switch to a business account, this is easy to do by selecting **Settings > Account > Switch to Business Account** and select a category, e.g., **Local Businesses** and **Bookstore**.
2. **Edit your profile** by adding a profile picture, description, location and website address.
3. **Build a contact list.** If you are on other social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter, post a link to your new Instagram account and encourage followers there to follow you on Instagram. You can also select **Invite Facebook friends** or invite contacts from other platforms such as Gmail, LinkedIn etc.
4. **Post a photo or a video to your profile or Story.**

To **post a photo** on Instagram, select the (+) symbol at the top of the screen and select a photo or video from your phone to upload.

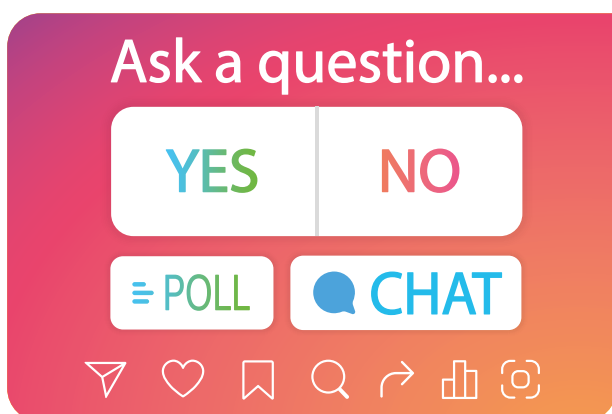
You can also take photos on the Instagram app by selecting the camera icon, but its quality won't be guaranteed. We recommend that you take the photo on your phone or camera, ensure it is high quality, and then upload to Instagram.

You'll then have the option within the Instagram app of adjusting the photo, adding filters and experimenting with the lighting. Thus you can enhance your photo – Instagram is all about very high quality, aesthetically appealing images.

Once you have selected and edited your photo, you can add a text caption and hashtags and

a select a location. You can also tag relevant accounts, such as the publisher, author or cover designer of a title you are showing.

Once you're happy with your post, select **Share** and your picture will appear on your profile and your followers' feeds. Or, you can post your photo (or video) as an Instagram Story. Select Your Story and it'll be uploaded there and appear on your profile for 24 hours.



"We find Instagram incredibly useful. It's the main way we reach customers on social media. It allows us to be 'us' but in a virtual space. We find video a great way to 'chat' to customers about new releases, books we are enjoying or upcoming events. This was invaluable during lockdown when customers were not allowed in a physical shop, but it is something we have continued. It allows us to maintain an 'authentic' presence, and we enjoy not being hindered by a word count."

Emma Milne-White, Hungerford Bookshop

Tips for effective content

- Promote your Instagram account via your website, email signature and other marketing materials.
- Post once or twice a day if you can.
- Use hashtags related to your location so users can easily find your posts such as:
#London
#BirminghamBookshop
#Galway
#CardiffBusiness.
- Add your opening hours to your bio.
- Use hashtags related to books and the book community such as:
#bookstagram
#bookworm
#bookish
#bookobsessed
#booklover
#bookshop
#bookshopping
#BookshopsoftheWorld
#BookshopsofInstagram
#ChooseBookshops.
- Experiment with Instagram Stories and create **Highlights** so they're permanently on your Instagram and don't disappear after 24 hours (as per regular Instagram Stories) – e.g., Events, Staff Reading Picks, Book Clubs.
- Like other social media platforms remember to @ (tag) the author, publisher, illustrator etc. in posts, so that they (and their followers) see your post and may respond. Even if they don't retweet/share it, a like from them will mean more people will see your Instagram post.
- Upload photos of stacks of books – your bestsellers that week, staff picks etc. as well as taking advantage of campaigns/themes in the calendar – for example, feminist books for Feminist Book Fortnight; summer reads; Christmas highlights; titles related to author events.

- The quality of your photos is key. Use a smartphone with a good camera or use high-resolution photos that a photographer has taken. Make sure you credit external photographers.
- Experiment with how you want to share events– Instagram Stories, with either short videos or posts with captions, or Instagram Live to stream the event live.

"Because we believe books are beautiful, the visual nature of Instagram is a good fit to showcase our product (though I hate that word!). Instagram is also a fantastic way for us to make connections with other businesses that have similar customers to us, and occasionally the bookshop collaborates with others for marketing purposes. We have also used Instagram to interview authors and be interviewed about being a bookseller. The platform allows us to create conversation around books (though we try to ensure a 'call to action' by referencing links in our bio)."

Emma Milne-White, Hungerford Bookshop



Enhancing your Instagram profile

Instagram Live

You can start a live broadcast on your channel which your followers can join and connect with you in real time. This feature is particularly useful for live-streaming events or for doing author Q&As. It works the same way as many other live platforms where users can ask questions and leave comments whilst the event is taking place, as well as reaction icons.

To access Instagram Live, click on the [+] icon and select Live. You can find a Tutorial on how to use it at help.instagram.com. Join others' Instagram Live events first to get a feel for how it can work.

Reels

Reels is a feature where you can record and edit short, 60-second videos and customise them by adding music, effects and voiceovers.

To create a reel, click on the [+] icon (where you can also create a Post, Story, and go Live) and hold down the icon to create a video. You can then customise the Reel with music, effects and preview it before posting.

Instagram Analytics

You can access analytics about your followers, posts and more under **Insights** in your **Settings**. Here you will be able to find various insights such as which posts have performed well, your followers' demographics and the best time to post.

Scheduling posts

To schedule Instagram to post things for you at a later, specific time, see Instagram Posts in Facebook Business Manager.

Blocking followers on Instagram

You can **Block**, **Restrict**, **Remove and Report** followers on Instagram by going to the three dot icon on their profile or you can **Report** a specific post or comment.

TikTok



TikTok is a video-sharing social media app which allows users to create, watch, and share short videos. At the moment, it is particularly popular with 16–24 year olds, but its appeal is widening all the time. Our small survey of BA members showed just under 17% of booksellers use TikTok at the time of writing, but we expect this to increase, particularly for those who want to target a young adult audience.

TikTok offers a vast collection of music, special effects and filters which can be added to videos. There's also an option to upload existing videos, giving them longevity. TikTok uses localised hashtags, useful if you are trying to reach customers close by. Like other social media platforms, TikTok uses trending topics to curate videos for their users.

#BookTok is a fast-growing book community on the platform where users share reviews, recommendations, reaction videos and more using the hashtag #BookTok. At the time of writing the videos using this hashtag have had 41.4 billion views.

TikTok basics

For You: The app's home screen, which is personalised to each user and where you'll find a stream of videos from other users. The more you use the app and engage with content from other users, the more the videos be tailored to your interests.

Following: Content from users you're following. To follow a TikTok account, go to a user profile and click follow.

Like: To like a video, tap the Heart icon on the right of the video or double-tap on the video.

Discover: In this feed you'll find trending videos, hashtags, other creators, and sponsored content.

Inbox: Where your notifications are including followers, mentions and tags, comments and likes. Direct messages can also be accessed here by clicking on the airplane icon on the top-right corner.

Create a TikTok account

1. Download the TikTok app.
2. Sign up using your phone number, email address or login with your Facebook, Google or Twitter account.
3. Tap **Profile** and **Edit Profile** and add your profile picture, bio/description and links to your website and other social media accounts.
4. To switch to a Business Account, go to **Settings and privacy > Manage account > Switch to Business Account**.
5. Pick a category for your business.
6. Add a website and email address to your profile so users can easily contact you and find out more about your bookshop.
7. Invite your friends and contacts to follow your TikTok by going to **Me**, tapping the add person symbol in the corner and tap Invite Friends.

Once your account is set up, get familiar with the app by seeing what videos are trending, following other accounts and browsing the app.

To **post a video** on TikTok, tap on the [+] icon to open camera mode. At the time of writing, you can choose between a 15-second, 60-second or 3-minute video and you can either upload an existing video from your phone or create a video within the TikTok app.

Tips for effective content

- Engage your audience with videos that are well shot and attractive to look at. If you are speaking, plan what you are going to say in advance.
- Authenticity is key. Too hard a sales pitch will not attract viewers.
- Respond to comments regularly. To keep your profile active, respond to queries and to remove anything unpleasant.
- Ideas for videos could include unboxing new releases, a run through staff recommendations, a tour of the bookshop, storytimes, behind-the-scenes and exclusives, a day in the life of a bookseller, competitions, stories from the shop floor.
- Use TikTok Analytics to see how often a video is viewed and gauge what gets most views, to tailor your posts to your audience.



Enhancing your TikTok profile

Hashtags

Hashtags will help your content get discovered by other users and help the TikTok algorithm identify what kind of topics your content is related to.

Effects and Filters

Effects and **Filters** are used to customise and add details to TikTok videos. While the Filters are similar to those you'd find in Instagram, the Effects can entirely change the video. TikTok has a library of Effects available so it's good to get a feel for what's possible by browsing the variety of Effects available.

Music

Music is the heart of TikTok and the platform is full of short-clips of songs to enhance your videos.

Be authentic

Reveal your bookshop's true personality – that way, TikTok users will connect with your content which builds the trust in your brand.

Views and analytics

Once you start sharing content on TikTok, you can check how many people have watched the videos by looking at the view numbers on your profile. You can also check your Inbox for notifications such as followers, likes and tags. You can also find more detailed analytics under **Manage Account** in your **Settings**.

Blocking abuse on TikTok

If you need to block or report a user on TikTok, click on the [...] icon. If you need to report a specific video on TikTok, click on the arrow button alongside the video.

"TikTok is a great way to see what other innovative booksellers around the world are doing, how authors are engaging and the #BookTok books that are getting attention, to try and be ahead of the trends. I enjoy other #BookTok users' content that features book reviews and discussions about their shops - typical days, guided tours etc. We'll do more of this in the future and of course much more song, dance and theatre!" Dan Fridd, Bookbugs and Dragon Tales



YouTube is a video sharing service where users can watch, like, share, comment and upload their own videos. With other social media platforms available for short video content, YouTube is ideal for long-form videos in particular. It's not only used as a social networking platform, it's also a search engine.

In our survey of BA members, only just under 17% use YouTube at the time of writing. They use it to post videos of their events and for school events.

YouTube basics

Home: Videos based on your recent activity, related to videos you've recently viewed and videos in the same category.

Explore: Like other social media platforms, the Explore feature highlights trending videos.

Subscription: The Subscription tab shows recent activity from the channels you have subscribed to. When you subscribe to a channel, you'll receive a notification whenever a new video is uploaded.

Library: Your viewing history, videos saved to watch later and liked videos.

"The one thing you get with YouTube over and above other channels, is the longevity. Whilst an Instagram story, TikTok video or a tweet might have wider reach, it's likely to be short-lived and then it will either disappear or be lost beneath a social media sea - whereas YouTube interviews with writers can be discovered much later as readers search for content about those writers."

Nic Bottomley, Mr B's Emporium

Create a YouTube account

1. Go to YouTube on a computer or phone and create an account or sign in using an existing Google account.
2. Go to **Your Channel** and select **Choose New Channel**.
3. Fill in the details to name your new business channel. Then, click **Create**. This will create a new **Brand Account**.
4. Customise your channel by going to **Customize channel > Layout > Branding and Basic Info**. Here you can add branding such as a profile picture and banner image, add a channel description – use descriptive keywords so that your account appears in relevant searches, customise your channel URL, add links to other social media platforms and more.
5. You can now start uploading videos to your channel. To post a video, click on Create in the top-right corner and follow the instructions.



Enhancing your YouTube profile

YouTube Live: You can live-stream events as well as post recordings of events via YouTube. To live-stream an event, click on the Create icon and click Go Live and follow the instructions.

Backlinks: YouTube increases website traffic which can lead to new customers. Include links to your website (and social media platforms) in your video description.

Keywords: YouTube is owned by Google so make sure you use descriptive keywords in your video descriptions and video titles so that the search engine can understand what the videos are about and rank them accordingly.

Tags: Tags help YouTube's algorithm. Add tags that are relevant to your video so that you reach viewers who are interested in your content.

Comments: Respond to comments on your videos and leave comments, as this will increase your engagement.

Subscribe: Encourage viewers to subscribe to your channel so they are the first to be notified when a new video goes live.

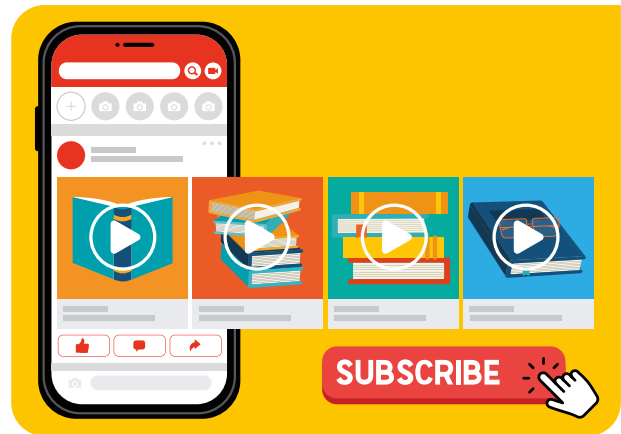
Increase views: Use relevant keywords in a video's title, tags and description so that users can easily find your content.

Sharing videos: YouTube has a useful search widget making it easier to share your videos across other platforms, which increases views and engagement.

Playlists: Organising your videos into playlists is a great way to keep a viewer watching your videos. When a viewer watches a video in a playlist, the next video will play afterwards – for example, you might have a playlist called “Storytime” or “Author Events”.

YouTube Analytics: Get to know your audience by keeping track of key data related to your videos and channel such as views, subscribers, impressions, watch-time and viewer

demographics. To access your YouTube analytics, click on your profile icon > YouTube Studio > Analytics.



"YouTube was massively important to us during lockdown. We ran storytimes and two video series of author interviews. One, 'Box of Teeth' is still ongoing, a series of author interviews about all kinds of subjects loosely connected to writing. It's a great way to work with writers who are further afield and so not likely to be able to attend a local event, but who we want to celebrate in a way that our customers can enjoy."

Nic Bottomley, Mr B's Emporium

Driving traffic to your website




Once you're set up on social media, don't waste the opportunity to link customers to your website – whether it's a direct link to buy the book you're recommending, a book review, a booking page for events or simply to find out more about your bookshop story.

Add website links to your posts. You can use:

- a URL (web address) on Facebook or Twitter
- a clickable link on Instagram Stories (note: URLs are not clickable on Instagram posts)
- a URL link in the description of your YouTube video.

A useful tool to use in your social media bio (where you describe your shop), particularly on Instagram and Twitter, is **LinkTree**. This is helpful if you have multiple links you want readily available for your followers. For example, you might want to gather together a link to your website, a link to an upcoming event, one to a blog post and one to your online shop. Visit linktr.ee for more information.




Link to everywhere

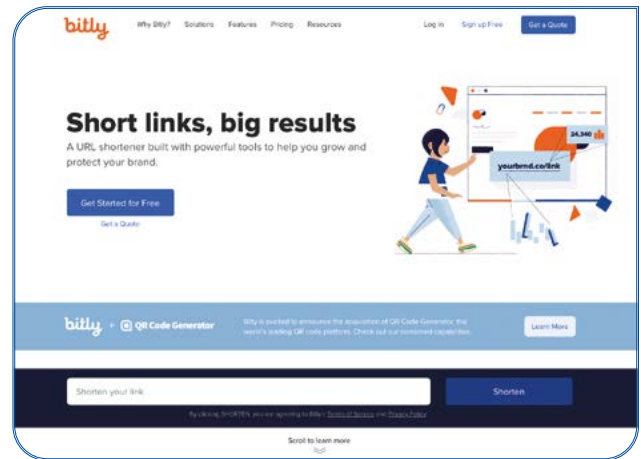
Linktree is the launchpad to your latest video, article, recipe, tour, store, website, social post - everywhere you are online.

Use it anywhere

Take your Linktree wherever your audience is, to help them to discover all your important content.



If you have a really long URL that you'd like to shorten, use **bitly.com**



You might want to gather together a link to your website, a link to an upcoming event, one to a blog post and one to your online shop.



Driving traffic to your Bookshop.org profile

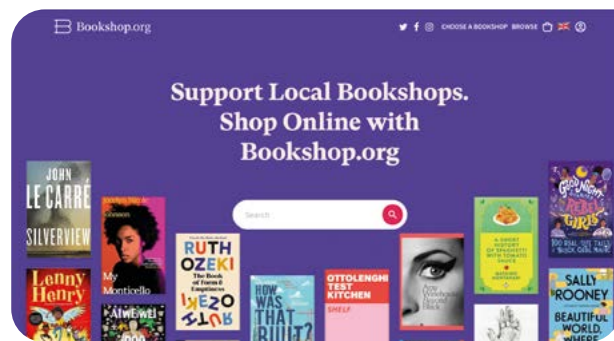
Bookshop.org

If you are a Bookshop.org affiliate (as all BA members in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland can be, selling books via Bookshop.org), to drive sales use your social media posts to link to your Bookshop.org profile. You can share your affiliate link to posts about individual books or share lists of recommendations you've created on Bookshop.org.

When you include a link to Bookshop.org, make sure you use your particular affiliate link, so that the reader/viewer will be taken direct to your bookshop's page; if you simply type 'bookshop.org' in a post, a more general hyperlink to the Bookshop.org portal will come up and you won't gain as much from the transaction.

To share your affiliate link to a post about a title or a list:

- Log in to your Bookshop.org affiliate account.
- Search for the book you'd like to recommend by title or ISBN or find your list.
- Scroll down to where it says 'your affiliate link' and click 'copy'.
- Use this link in your post. If you want to get people into the shop too, you can always recommend a title and then say something like, "Come into our shop on XYZ High Street or buy it from us online at [your affiliate link]".
- You can also use your affiliate link to highlight a post about pre-ordering a title.
- There is a 3 minute video on sharing an affiliate link at: [youtube.com/watch?v=Z-sSHGCLgg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z-sSHGCLgg).
- Find a short video on creating Bookshop.org lists at: [youtube.com/watch?v=VCgVEz9g-9k](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VCgVEz9g-9k).



Kiri Inglis of Bookshop.org says,

"The most engaging way of signposting books both in-store and to your social following is to take a snap of the book in situ in your shop, add a line about your selection, then tag the author and publisher along with your Bookshop.org link. Short videos flicking through coffee table books, cookbooks or children's books really help customers make a choice and you can also use publisher assets."

"If you tag @bookshop_uk in your post, we're more likely to spot it and share. We're keen to include bookseller reviews in our newsletter, tagging us is a great way for us to spot your recommendations. This is also how we discover lists to add to our homepage - a good way to be discovered and make extra sales."

If you have any queries, send them to uk.support@bookshop.org or if you'd like to book a call with the Bookshop Partnership Manager, email mark.thornton@bookshop.org

Saving time



There are various ways of saving time on managing your social media profiles.

Make a plan: Create a social media schedule on a timescale that is ideal for your bookshop, such as a weekly, fortnightly, monthly or quarterly plan. This will map-out key dates you'd like to promote and important information that you'd want to share – and will remind you and your staff of what to post and when. For example, you can note upcoming events and when you need to start posting about them, or titles you want to recommend in the run up to Valentine's Day or Black History Month.

Write and schedule posts in bulk: This can take some time to prepare, but a quiet afternoon planning can save time in the long run and make sure that your posts/tweets go out when you need them to and don't get forgotten. You can schedule posts across platforms. There are a variety of tools available to do this, so do some research to find tools which suit your needs. A good starting point is the built-in schedule tools on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram (see above).

tweetdeck.twitter.com is also a helpful scheduling tool for Twitter and **later.com** is good for Instagram.



Cross-posting and repurposing content across multiple social platforms:

Doing this is not only a great time-saver, it's a good way to repurpose content and extend its longevity. It also keeps your accounts fresh and up to date and can be useful if you are running a campaign/promotion on all platforms you use.

Cross-posting isn't for everyone, as many users and businesses like to use different platforms for different purposes. You can edit the content slightly for each platform so it doesn't appear spammy, especially to users who are following you on more than one platform. A good place to start is to edit the content with the character limits on each platform in mind, as well as using a different image/video so the content is repurposed but looking fresh.

Map-out key dates you'd like to promote and important information that you'd want to share... You can note upcoming events and when you need to start tweeting about them, or titles you want to recommend in the run up to Valentine's Day or Black History Month.

Paid for advertising and promotional posts

The beauty of advertising on social media is being able to explore exactly what you'd like to achieve with the promotion and then customise the adverts. It's important to start small and don't spend too much money at the outset.

- Set objectives.
- Experiment with formats.
- Include a strong call-to-action in the advert to get users involved.
- Analyse the results. We recommended that you check-in regularly during your ad campaigns to see how they're running and adjust the cost if necessary.

Facebook

If you have the budget, boosted posts and Facebook Ads are a great way to target specific audiences and increase engagement. Although similar, boosted posts and Facebook Ads have different purposes and it's important to identify exactly what you want to achieve.

If you want to increase engagement on your Page or to develop awareness of your bookshop, boosting a post is a quick and effective way to maximise visibility and grow your audience. If you want to create advance advertising and run a campaign, using the Ads Manager is the best option.

- To **boost a post**, write a new Post or go to a Post you've recently created on your Page's timeline. In the bottom right-hand corner of the post, you'll see a button called **Boost Post**.

Click on **Boost Post** and customise your promotion by selecting who you want to target, such as a specific age group or location, and picking your budget – you'll be able to see an estimated number of people you can reach for each budget option. You can track the performance of your posts to see which work best with your audience.

• Facebook Ad Manager

Visit: facebook.com/business/ads and facebook.com/business/small-business/advertise for more information.

Instagram

Instagram Ads use visual appeal to reach new followers – whether it's a beautiful shot of your bookshop, an upcoming Facebook event or a book review. It could be a link to a book you're passionate about and want to hand-sell through a video on the platform (even better with a direct link to your bookshop to buy the book!).

Instagram Ads are managed in Facebook and can be created in the same way as Facebook Ads, so you might run an advertising campaign across Facebook and Instagram.

Instagram Ads appear in users' feeds and Instagram Stories. There are a variety of formats available including:

- Carousel posts
- Photo Ads
- Videos Ads
- Stories Ads.

There is also the option for adverts in Reels, Explore and the Instagram Shop.

To set up an Instagram ad, go to facebook.com/adsmanger

Twitter

Twitter Ads are objective-focused which means users can optimise and manage the ads towards certain goals – whether it's improving the reach of a post, the number of website clicks or increasing followers, there are a number of different objectives available.

Like other social media platforms, Twitter has a variety of formats available for its adverts including Image Ads, Video Ads, Carousel Ads and more.

To start advertising on Twitter, visit business.twitter.com and select **Start a campaign**.

Facebook and Instagram Shops

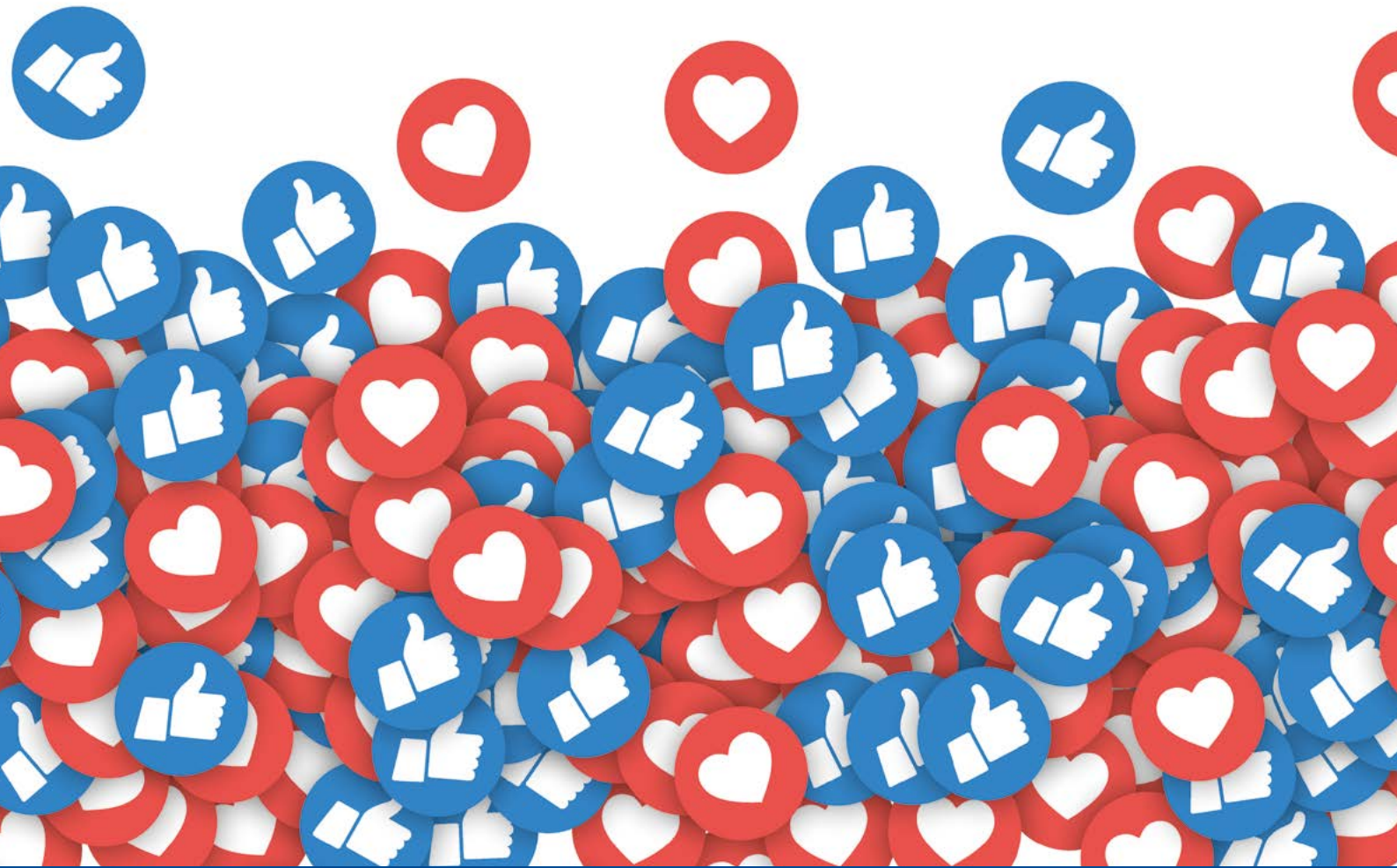
You can use Facebook and Instagram to sell directly, by using the Shop feature. If you're already selling online, you can sync your platform (e.g. Shopify) to your Facebook and Instagram accounts for no cost and sell direct to your followers.

Facebook and Instagram Shops are a way of providing a catalogue of your products for customers to browse online. They provide a fast and secure checkout process.

You'll need to be approved by Facebook/Instagram before taking any further steps – for more information, visit:

- facebook.com/business/shops (which covers both Instagram and Facebook).





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